



COVID-19

ACT NOW!



WEAR A MASK



STAY 6 FEET APART



AVOID CROWDS

For People Living in Prisons and Jails

Updated Mar. 5, 2021

[Print](#)

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is caused by a virus called SARS-CoV-2. This virus spreads easily from person-to-person. It is important to protect yourself from getting COVID-19 because it can make you very sick.*

Living in prisons and jails puts you at higher risk for getting COVID-19 because:

- It may be hard to stay [at least 6 feet](#) away (2 arm lengths) from other people.
- There may not be enough space to keep people with COVID-19 away from others.
- You may be sharing space with someone who has the virus and does not know it, because they are not coughing or showing other symptoms.
- Staff or visitors may have the virus and not know it.

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

About COVID-19

- Many people who have COVID-19 do not feel sick.
- For those who do feel sick, some [signs and symptoms of COVID-19](#) include:

Fever/chills

Coughing

Feeling tired

Having a hard time breathing

Pain in the head or body

New loss of taste or smell

Sore throat

Stuffy or runny nose

Nausea/vomiting

Diarrhea

How COVID-19 Spreads

The virus [spreads](#) when a person with COVID-19 breathes, coughs, sneezes, talks, or sings within 6 feet of other people.

- Droplets are formed when you breathe. These droplets can contain the virus. If people nearby breathe in the droplets, then they can get infected.
- Droplets can stay in the air for minutes to hours. Droplets can also infect someone more than 6 feet away.
- Less commonly, people may get infected by the virus by touching something with the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes.

People at Risk For COVID-19

- Anyone can get infected.
- [Older adults](#) and people with certain [health issues](#) tend to get sicker with COVID-19. Some of these issues include:
 - [Cancer](#)
 - [Chronic kidney disease](#)
 - [COPD \(chronic obstructive pulmonary disease\)](#)
 - [Heart problems](#)
 - [Type 2 diabetes](#)
 - [Obesity](#)
 - [Smoking](#)
 - [Sickle cell disease](#)
 - [Pregnancy](#)
 - [Weakened immune system from solid organ transplant](#)
 - [Down syndrome](#)

If you have any of these health issues, it is more important than ever to protect yourself and get the COVID-19 [vaccine](#) when it is available to you.

Protect Yourself and Others

- Try to stay at least **6 feet** (2 arm lengths) from others, especially people from a different housing unit.
 - Other times where you should try to distance yourself include:
 - Recreation, especially when inside
 - Mealtime (if in a dining area with people from other units)
 - Walking in hallways
- **Wear a mask** that covers your nose and mouth, especially when around staff or people from a different housing unit.
- Always **wash your hands** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds**:
 - After touching your mask
 - Before touching your face
 - After coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose
 - After using the bathroom
 - Before eating
 - Before and after making food
 - Before taking medicine

Common Spaces

- Avoid sharing forks, spoons, dishes, and cups.
- Go outside for your recreation time if you can
- Sleep head to foot if there is more than one bed in a room. This gives you more space between your face and others around you.
- If visitors are allowed, visitors will be screened for COVID-19 and asked to wear a mask.
 - Visitors cannot enter the building if they do not clear the screening process (for example, a temperature check), or if they refuse to be screened.


If You Were Near Someone with COVID-19

- You may be tested for the virus even if you do not feel sick.
- You will be sent to an area away from others. This is called quarantine.
 - Quarantine separates people who were exposed to COVID-19 to see if they become sick.
 - This room may be a single cell or a large area with others.
 - Quarantine helps protect you from getting or spreading the virus to others.

What to Do if You Feel Sick

- Tell a correctional officer or staff member if you feel sick so you can get medical care.
- You may be sent to an area by yourself. This is called medical isolation.
 - Medical isolation separates people who may have COVID-19 from people who are not sick. This is so you don't get others sick.
 - This room may be a single cell or a large area with others who are also sick.
 - Medical isolation is *not* to punish you.
- You may be tested for COVID-19.
 - If your test is positive, showing you have COVID-19, you will need to stay in medical isolation for at least 10 days.
 - If your test is negative, but you were near someone with COVID-19, you may be sent to a quarantine area for 14 days to see if you develop COVID-19.
 - A negative test result means that you probably did not have COVID-19 at the time of testing or that it was too early in your infection.
 - You could be exposed to COVID-19 after being tested.
 - You may be tested again.

Resources

- Visit CDC's [How to Protect Yourself & Others](#) webpage for more information on the important ways to slow the spread of COVID-19.
- It is natural to feel stress, grief and worry during the COVID-19 pandemic. Refer to CDC's [Coping with Stress](#) webpage for more details on how you can help yourself and others manage stress.
- Content from this webpage can also be found in CDC's document [What You Need to Know about COVID-19 if You are Incarcerated/Detained](#)  [253 KB, 2 pages].

*This webpage contains recommendations for people in prisons and jails. CDC acknowledges it may be difficult to stay 6 feet apart and avoid crowds in these settings.

** If available, use alcohol-based hand rub when soap and water are not immediately available.

Last Updated Mar. 5, 2021

Content source: [National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases \(NCIRD\), Division of Viral Diseases](#)